Faith, Culture and Fear:

Comparing Islamophobia in Early Modern Spain and Twenty-First Century Europe

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Relations between citizens from different ethnic and religious communities, particularly between majorities and minorities, emerge as a pressing issue across contemporary Europe.. In 2008, the Pew Survey of Global Attitudes found that hostility towards Jews and Muslims was widespread. More than half of Spaniards and circa half of Germans who were surveyed admitted that they did not like Muslims whilst unfavourable opinions of Muslims in Poland and France were 46% and 38% respectively. Hostility towards Jews was slightly less marked although just as concerning (Pew 2008). These findings have prompted Ramadan to note how:

> The growing Muslim presence in Europe has become a central
> issue for all European countries, east and west. The numerous
> debates that have been breaking out across the continent about
> "multiculturalism," "secularity", or even "identity" are almost
> always connected to this "Islamic" factor (Ramadan 2008).

In response to this situation, historians, and to a certain extent more popular commentators too, have been quick to recognise that modern European anti-Semitism has roots extending far into the European Past and that it is, to a large extent, rooted in many of the prejudices

and anti-Jewish images that have been circulating in the continent for centuries. Islamophobia has, on the contrary, been presented as a recent phenomenon. Observers have instead variously pointed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the 9/11 attacks and the so-called "War on Terror", as well as increasing anxieties about the demographic and cultural impact of the migration of Muslims into Europe, to account for the re-emergence of far-right political parties and increased tensions in almost every country of Western Europe.

To date, scholarly studies seeking to find earlier roots for the historical background of Islamic-Christian conflict have focused on the long-term repercussions of the bloody crusades to the Holy Land or the equally bitter struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean and central Europe fought between the Ottoman Sultanate and its Christian foes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such studies have particularly focused on the evolution and place of the Muslim – the 'Saracen' – as the quintessentially antagonistic 'other' in the European mindset. Modern commentators on the rise of Islamophobic sentiment in contemporary Europe have seldom, if ever, sought to compare the present situation of Muslim communities with the treatment of Islamic minorities residing under Christian rule in Europe, and specifically in Spain, during the medieval and early modern periods (Tolan 2002 and 2008; ʿAẓmah and Fokas 2007; Hellyer 2009).

The focus of this article will be on the persecution of the Moriscos – the crypto-Muslim minority in early modern Spain – that eventually led to their mass expulsion from Spain in 1609. The status and treatment of the Moriscos will be analysed and compared with that of modern Europe's Muslim minorities. It will examine in separate sections the different processes by which the crypto-Muslim minority came to be perceived both as an increasingly alien community, and as a national security threat that needed to be eliminated. The third and final section will analyse the various measures that the government of Spanish Habsburg considered, from the 1580s onwards, in its desperation to bring an end to the perceived "Morisco problem". This discussion of the situation of Muslim communities in early modern Spain will highlight the manner in which the events in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should sound a cautionary warning to all Europeans of the twenty-first century.

Is such a comparison, however, a valid or a spurious and anachronistic one? This article seeks to expose how the factors behind the rise of Islamophobia and rejection of Muslim minority communities in Western Europe are far from new and unprecedented phenomenons. Quite on the contrary, many of the distinguishing characteristics of the rise of

Islamophobic sentiment in Modern Europe can already be detected in the events that led to the expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain in 1609, which was not merely the inevitable result of prevalent anti-Muslim sentiment but rather the outcome of very particular circumstances and the direct result of two factors:

1. The inextricable conflation of faith and culture.
2. An extremely unfavourable political context in which the Muslim minority came to be perceived as a danger to the security and survival of the state.

When combined, these two factors created an explosive dynamic that inexorably lead to mass ethnic cleansing.

The presence of large crypto-Muslim communities made early modern Spain unique amongst early modern western European states. These communities were not, however, recent: their origins lay in the invasion and conquest of Visigothic Spain by an Arabo-Berber army in 711. Muslim Spain flourished from the eighth to the late tenth century, a period when Iberian converts (*muwalladun*) in all probability far outnumbered the Muslims of Arab or Berber origin. From the eleventh century onwards, the Christian kingdoms of northern Spain – Castile, Aragón and Portugal – were able to (re)conquer most of the southern lands in the Iberian Peninsula, although it was only in January 1492 that the final remnant of Islamic Spain – Granada – was subdued by the armies of Catholic Monarchs Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragón.

The decline of Muslim Spain did not signal the expulsion of the defeated Muslim populations. As early as the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, significant numbers of Muslims continued to live under Christian rule after the fall of Islamic cities and states to Christian armies. After 1492, the most sizeable Muslim minorities were concentrated in the regions of Valencia and Granada. The Crown and feudal lords saw subject Muslims as a valuable labour force and source of fiscal revenue with the result that the Christian authorities tolerated Islamic worship and practices as a necessary evil (Harvey 1992). The uneasy *modus vivendi* between the Christians and defeated Muslims did not, however, survive much beyond the conquest of Granada. A revolt in Granada and the Alpujarras mountains in 1499 led the Catholic Monarchs to consider the terms of the surrender treaty null and void. In 1501-2, an edict compelled all Castilian Muslims to convert to Christianity and in 1525-6 her grandson

Charles V followed suit by forcing Muslims residing in the territories of the Crown of Aragón to convert. These unwilling converts became known as the *Moriscos* (Harvey 2005).

Sixteenth-Century Spain: An Early Modern Clash of Faiths *and* Cultures?

The royal and church authorities hoped that the forced conversions of the early sixteenth century would put an end to religious dissention in Spain and create a united and homogenous society. They did not. Most Muslims forced to convert to Christianity simply continued to practice Islam in secret and within the privacy and protection of their closely-knit communities. The secular and ecclesiastical authorities considered the continued practice of crypto-Islam as both a heinous religious crime and a direct threat to the security of Spain. Deviance from Catholic dogma represented heresy and, in accordance with the outlook of early modern Catholic Europeans, risked angering God and bringing upon Spain His terrible wrath. Moreover, as crypto-Muslims, the Moriscos were widely suspected of maintaining a strong sense of sympathy for Spain's Islamic enemies, especially the powerful Ottoman Sultanate.

The dilemma facing the Spanish authorities was how to react to the Moriscos' unwillingness to become sincere Christians. In addition to their religious obstinacy, the Moriscos living in the large communities of Granada and Valencia continued to wear their traditional clothing, speak and write in Arabic and remained proud of their Arabo-Berber cultural heritage. The secular and ecclesiastical authorities soon realised that any attempt to assimilate the Moriscos would necessarily imply their acculturation: in effect the complete eradication of their cultural particularities. The programme for the cultural assimilation of the Moriscos began as early as the forced conversions. A royal edict prohibiting the typical clothing of the Moriscos in 1511 clumsily justified the measure by explaining that it was necessary to ensure that "they no longer retain any memory of their previous Muslim way of life" (*que no hubiesen más memoria de las cosas de moros*). Two years later, another royal edict forbade non-Morisco 'Old Christian' women from veiling their faces or dressing in the "Muslim fashion", since those that did were "forgetful of the general instruction to the effect that the newly converted should leave aside their Muslim dress and clothing, and should go about dressed in the Christian manner" (Harvey 2005, p. 72).

The first serious attempt to tackle the "Morisco question" and formulate a programme for assimilation came in 1526, when Charles V ordered an assembly of theologians gathered in Granada to consider the problem presented by the Moriscos and formulate possible

policies to ensure their assimilation. The theologians argued that only a hard-line approach would be successful. The 1526 royal edict that resulted from this conference sought to implement a coherent programme for the obliteration of Arabic/Islamic culture within Morisco communities by means of a series of draconian measures, including a prohibition of written or spoken Arabic, the confiscation of books and documents in Arabic, the outlawing of the use of veils by women and the obligation to dress "like Christians". Moriscos would no longer be allowed to use their bathhouses for fear that these were being used as secret Mosques and were compelled to leave the front doors of their houses open on Fridays, Sundays to enable the authorities could conduct unannounced spot checks to ensure that they were not observing the Islamic Friday prayers and not working on Christian holidays. Such extreme measures clearly demonstrate that, in the eyes of the Christian authorities, faith and culture were inextricably linked. To speak or write in Arabic or to dress in the Arabo-Berber garb was in the eyes of the Spanish authorities irrefutable evidence of a continued adherence to Islam (Harvey 2005, pp 104-110).

The Moriscos were able to bribe Charles V to suspend the 1526 edict and many communities also negotiated individual exemptions from inquisitorial persecution by paying a special tax known as the *situado*, but they gained only a temporary respite. During the reign of Charles' pious son and successor, Philip II, the Moriscos once more attracted the unwelcome attention of royal scrutiny, partly because of the intensification of the war against the Ottoman Sultanate in the Mediterranean during the 1560s. In 1567, King Philip issued instructions for the re-implementation of his father's draconian legislation, despite the warnings that he received from Moriscos leaders and even from the viceroy of Granada. Pushed to the limit, the Moriscos of Granada and the Alpujarras mountains rose up against the Spanish Crown in 1568 and fought a savage guerrilla war for over three years (Harvey 2005, pp. 204-263).

A measure of the intractable nature of the situation can be gathered in the terms and expressions used in contemporary documents and texts. The terms *moro* or *moros* are often translated by modern English-speaking historians as "Moor" and "Moors", thus giving them an ethnic meaning by which to generically describe the inhabitants of Muslim Spain and North Africa. Such a translation, however, obscures the fact that for early modern Spaniards, *moro/moros* had also become clearly synonymous with the practice of Islam. By way of illustration, the historian Luis de Mármol Carvajal refers in his history of the Morisco revolt, published in 1600, to the draconian 1567 edict's ban on the use of "Muslim names and

surnames" (nomes y *sobrenombres de moros*) as well as the prohibition of "Muslim clothing" (*vestidos moriscos*) (Mármol Carvajal, 1852 book 2 ,chapter 6). In some extreme instances, the languages of religion and race or ethnicity were even merged together. A petition submitted to the Crown by 'Old Christian' inhabitants of Valladolid in 1545, for instance, referred to the "men and women of the Christian race" (*cristianos y cristianas de nación*) in opposition to the *Moriscos* (Cardaillac 1979, p. 48).

The extent to which the struggle between the Habsburg authorities and the Moriscos was a cultural one can easily be garnered from a remarkable contemporary source: the *memorial* of Francisco Nuñez Muley (Barletta 2007). This memorandum, submitted in 1567 by a high-ranking and elderly member of the Morisco community in Granada, sought to present the case of the Moriscos to the royal authorities. Nuñez Muley made an impassioned plea for the toleration of cultural difference and essentially argued that faith and culture were distinct. The motivation behind Nuñez Muley's efforts to separate faith and culture in his futile attempt to convince the Habsburg authorities that the Moriscos were good Christians is open to question and the memorandum should certainly not be taken as evidence of his own religious sincerity. The memorandum is nevertheless a startling document, seemingly at odds with its time. His comments on the prohibition of "Muslim" clothing are particularly evocative:

> In their reports, the prelates contend that the preservation of
> the traditional style of dress and footwear of the natives [of
> Granada] is tantamount to a continuation of the ceremonies
> and customs of the Muslims. I can only say (…) that these
> reports are wholly without merit, because the style of dress,
> clothing, and footwear of the natives cannot be said to be that
> of Muslims (…). It can more rightly be said to be clothing that
> corresponds to a particular kingdom (Barletta, 2007, p. 70).

There were other attempts by the Moriscos to "de-Islamize" their culture in the eyes of the Habsburg government and 'Old Christian' population of Spain. The most notorious is probably the dozen forged lead books (*libros plúmbeos*) of Sacromonte, a collection of lead tablets written in archaic Arabic and containing purported additions to the Acts of the Apostles, including words spoken by the Virgin Mary and St. Peter, brought to Spain by St. James (Santiago) and his disciples. Discovered outside Granada between 1595 and 1599,

these elaborate forgeries were intended to, in Maria García Arenal's words, "legitimize some aspects of their cultural identity as independent of religious faith and practice, in a desperate effort to safeguard part of that identity despite having had to abandon their religion" (Barrios Aguilera and García-Arenal 2006; Harvey 2005, 264-290; Harris 2007, pp. 47-87). Unfortunately for the Moriscos, such attempts to distinguish religion and culture did not meet a sympathetic ear and had no perceptible impact upon the attitudes of 'Old Christians'

Whilst the secular and church authorities, and most of the 'Old Christian' population, displayed a clear tendency to consider the Moriscos as a single culturally homogenous group or bloc, the reality was far more complex. As Mercedes García-Arenal has pointed out, there existed a great disparity amongst the different Morisco communities in Spain in terms of their culture and level of integration, and even assimilation, into society. Some smaller Morisco communities in Castile and Aragón, located in areas that had been under Christian rule for centuries, were well integrated into their local environment. These communities displayed evidence of a varying degree of assimilation and enjoyed good relations with their 'Old Christian' neighbours. Recent studies on Morisco communities in Spain have successfully brought to light examples of such integration and assimilation (Tueller 2002 and Dadson 2007). Mercedes García-Arenal has argued that assimilated Moriscos were probably far from exceptional and that it is the scarcity of sources that has obscured this fact. Only future research, and especially more detailed studies of individual Morisco communities, will ultimately determine whether such is the case or not (García-Arenal 2009).

The Enemy Within: The Moriscos and the Ottoman Threat

The association of culture and faith might well, in itself, have been enough to bring about the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609 but their fate was truly sealed by a second factor: their perceived disloyalty to the Habsburg monarchy and Catholic Church.

The rise of the formidable Ottoman Sultanate, and its seemingly inexorable westward expansion in the Mediterranean during the sixteenth century prior to the 1570s, created a climate of fear and paranoia in Spain. The Spanish monarchy and its allies suffered a series of humiliating military and naval disasters at the hands of the Ottomans and North African Muslims. The threat of an Ottoman invasion of the Iberian Peninsula was perceived as a distinct possibility by the Habsburg government and Spanish population. Coastal raids conducted by North African pirates and the sacking of the town of Ciutadella in the Balearic

island of Menorca by an Ottoman naval force in 1558 only heightened these fears (Braudel 1978, vol. 2, pp. 943-5).

The dread of an Ottoman invasion led the Spanish authorities and population to consider the Moriscos as a direct threat to the security and survival of both the monarchy and church. The proximity of the majority of the Morisco population in Granada and Valencia to the coast only increased anxiety about the assistance that they could offer to an invasion force. The fears of the 'Old Christian' population were not entirely baseless. Incontrovertible evidence of contacts between Moriscos and Islamic rulers outside the Iberian Peninsula does exist. Nevertheless, the fear of a Morisco fifth column rapidly lost all proportion and became a collective panic (Harvey 2005, pp. 88-9; Hess 1968).

The 'Old Christians' did not trust the Moriscos and the political disloyalty of the latter became a familiar refrain of anti-Morisco discourse. The archbishop of Valencia, a vocal advocate of the expulsion of 1609, complained that the Moriscos openly exhibited their disloyalty to Spain and disdain for Catholicism when the tide of war in the Mediterranean appeared to favour the Ottomans (Ehlers 2006, p. 104). The archives of the Inquisition, particularly the denunciations made against Moriscos, also reveal that the fear of collusion between the Moriscos and Muslims outside the Iberian Peninsula was widespread amongst the 'Old Christian' population in Spain (Cardaillac 1979, pp. 78-84).

Even though they were exaggerated out of all proportion, such fears were based upon documented instances in which Muslim raiders received material assistance and intelligence from some Moriscos. Rapidly, however, *all* Moriscos became suspect of sympathy for the crown's Muslim enemies. The logical result of such anxieties was the passing of further draconian legislation seeking to neutralise the military threat presented by the Moriscos. Fearful of spies, the crown issued an edict in 1541 stipulating that any Morisco from Granada, North Africa or Aragón arrested in Valencia should be put to death. Over twenty years later, in 1563, Philip II reacted to panicky reports from his viceroy in Valencia by promulgating an edict ordering the Valencian Moriscos to disarm and hand over their weapons to royal officials (Ehlers 2006, pp. 20-1).

The widespread distrust of the Moriscos and assumption that they would act as a fifth column within Spain for the Ottomans ultimately became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Increased pressure on the Moriscos sparked armed uprisings in Granada and the Alpujarras Mountains in 1499-1500 and 1568-1571, which only appeared to confirm the worst fears of the

Christians. In reality the Morisco rebels in the second Alpujarras uprising received little assistance from North African Muslims and even less support from the Ottoman ruler, who was content to make empty promises and encourage the Morisco rebels in order to compel Philip II to divert men and resources away from the struggle in the eastern Mediterranean (Hess 1968). Although the uprising was restricted to the Alpujarras, it caused panic amongst the Christian authorities in the rest of Spain and particularly in Valencia (Salvador Esteban 1987).

The fear generated by the Moriscos continued unabated during the 1580s and 1590s, in spite of the Ottoman-Spanish truces that followed the battle of Lepanto and defeat of the Morisco rebellion in the Alpujarras (and the resulting deportation of all Granadan Moriscos to locations further inland within Castile). A memorandum, which was apparently submitted by Spanish intelligence to the royal council in the reign of Philip III, reported news of contacts between Moriscos and the Muslim ruler of Marrakesh in highly alarmist terms. The report alleged that the Moriscos has promised their potential ally an improbably huge force of 200,000 fighters and had committed themselves to support a Muslim invasion force. Moreover, the report added the warning that "what is to be feared is the multitude of Moriscos, among whom are men so anxious to throw off their subjugation…" and it also referred to indications of an imminent Ottoman offensive against Spain. Whether the ludicrously fantastic number of fighters was deliberately exaggerated by the Morisco emissaries in Marrakesh or by the author of the memorandum is unclear. It is nonetheless salient that the author of the memorandum highlighted the claim (Harvey 2005, pp. 305-8). The rare voices that rose to defend the Moriscos and that sought to persuade others of their loyalty, such as the archbishop of Seville, were simply too few in number to have an impact and were drowned out by the general hysteria (Haliczer 2000).

The social psychosis revolving around the fears of a Morisco fifth column was supplemented by keen anxieties about an allegedly higher birth rate that threatened to overwhelm the 'Old Christian' population of the Iberian Peninsula. The theme is certainly one that recurs in contemporary sources. The author of another memorandum sent to Philip III warned the monarch of the purported danger represented by the Moriscos by pointing out that "as their numbers grow, so does the confusion and envy [they cause] … it is in this manner that discord and confusion freely enter [into Spain]" (Cardaillac 1979, p. 55). This anxiety could even be found at the highest levels of the Spanish church. The archbishop of Valencia, for instance, complained to the King that the Moriscos would overrun the Catholic

population of Valencia since they "seize the best land in Spain, and within a few days they multiply in number and wealth" (Ehlers 2006, p. 110). A clear sense of the fear generated by the demography of the Moriscos is likewise evident from a vitriolic passage in Miguel de Cervantes' *Colloquy of the Dogs*, published soon after the expulsion of the Moriscos. In this passage, Cervantes accuses the Morisco "vipers" of enriching themselves by seizing the wealth of Spain and also of threatening to outbreed the 'Old Christian' population of Spain:

> They are increasing in number (…). Among them there is no
> such thing as chastity, nor do any of them, men or women,
> take religious orders. They all marry and multiply because
> frugal living makes them all the more fit for procreation. (…)
> (Cervantes 1972, pp. 242-3).

Cervantes did not hesitate to turn to the Old Testament in order to compare the Moriscos to the prolific Hebrews in Pharaoh's Egypt. Such hysterical fears appear to have had no basis in reality. Studies of the overall Morisco demography strongly suggest that the Morisco population did not augment in anywhere near so spectacular a manner during the sixteenth century (Carrasco 2005, pp. 244-7).

The End of Assimilation and Road towards a Final "Remedy":

The Morisco revolt in the Alpujarras ended the Spanish government's hopes of assimilating the Morisco population. In 1568 the inquisitors of Granada complained to the Supreme Council of the Inquisition that they were living "amongst our enemies the infidels" whilst another inquisitor, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, bemoaned the fact that he had never "found a [Morisco] neophyte who might have been a Christian" (Cardaillac 1979, pp. 92-3). This despair even found it way into literature. Miguel de Cervantes doubtless expressed the views of countless other 'Old Christian' Spaniards, on the subject of the Moriscos in his *Colloquy of the Dogs*: "You will rarely find among them one who sincerely believes the holy law of Christianity*"* (Cervantes 1972, p. 242).

From 1571 onwards, Philip II and his royal councillors sought to find a permanent solution to the "Morisco question". In the early 1580s, following the conquest of Portugal, the King of Spain and the royal council considered possible courses of action. Referring to the Moriscos, Philip wrote to the Inquisitor-General in 1582 to inform him of his wish that "a remedy should be found to rid these kingdoms once or for all of this inconvenience"

(Carrasco 2005, p. 255). It would probably be a grotesque exaggeration to directly compare the deliberations held in the 1580s with the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, which saw top-ranking Nazis gather and plan the systematic extermination of European Jewry as part of the so-called "Final solution to the Jewish question". Nevertheless, the chilling parallel between the Nazi search for an '*Endlösung der Judenfrage*' and King Philip's search for a final "remedy" to Spain's Morisco problem is difficult to overlook.

For the first time, "solutions" beyond assimilation were apparently mooted as serious possibilities. The notion that the Moriscos could not assimilated and must be eliminated from Spain as a group appeared in policy proposals submitted to the crown. Although expulsion was one of the options highlighted in the memoranda, other solutions proposed to the crown rivalled one another in terms of their horrifying nature. In 1587, for instance, the bishop of Segorbia advocated the mass deportation of all Moriscos to the barren wasteland of North America. Another advisor recommended than the Moriscos be used as slave labour in Spain's salt mines until their deaths. More than one advisor advocated the systematic castration of the male Moriscos and sterilisation of female Moriscos. Finally, in the most horrifying suggestion of all, an aristocrat from Valencia named Juan Boil de Arenos advised the King in 1601-2 to exterminate the Moriscos by arranging for their transportation on ships of the royal fleet out to sea, where they could be drowned *en masse* (Harvey 2005, pp. 294-300). Spain's existing military commitments in Northern Europe prevented Philip II and his advisors from implementing any of the solutions offered – and thereby initiate what would have become the first modern European genocide. The bitter struggle in the Low Countries and wars in France and against England were consuming Spanish military manpower and resources necessary to implement such schemes. The death of Philip II, in 1598, left the issue unresolved.

The ultimate resolution of the Morisco problem was not, however, to be delayed much longer. Under his son and successor Philip III, the debate moved from possible extermination to expulsion, as a result of the Spanish King's Christian scruples and also because of a fear of the threat of retaliation against Christians in Islamic territories. No less a person than the influential archbishop of Valencia encouraged the King to opt for expulsion since "the only remedy is to expel the Moriscos from Spain, and there is no hope of success through any other option" (Ehlers 2006, p. 141). Even when the decision was finally taken, the crown faced logistical problems: a continued scarcity of military manpower to supervise the expulsion and of ships required to transport the Moriscos out of Spain.

The opportunity to deal decisively with the Moriscos finally presented itself in 1609. Spain had already made peace with the French in 1598 and the English in 1604 and finally concluded a twelve-year truce with the Protestant Dutch rebels. The Spanish government was finally in a position to bring troops and ships back to Spain to supervise the expulsion of the Moriscos. In April 1609, the royal council approved the planned expulsion but kept news of it secret until September of that year, by which time troops and ships had been redeployed to the Mediterranean. Philip III justified this measure in the expulsion edict by claiming that the Morisco were "seeking to harm and subvert" the kingdom's inhabitants and blamed their "stubborness" (Cowans 2003, 145-6).

In a remarkably well organised and executed act of ethnic cleansing, about 300,000 Morisco men, women and children were herded by troops into ports on the Mediterranean coast and transported by sea to the coasts of North Africa. There was only limited resistance in Spain and most Moriscos resigned themselves to exile. The expulsion edict of 1609 brought to an abrupt end the Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula until the the arrival of large numbers of Muslim migrants into Spain from the 1980s onwards (Harvey 2005, pp. 291-331).

From 1609 to 2009: The Contested Place of Islam in Europe

There are disquieting similarities between anti-Muslim sentiment in sixteenth-century Spain and twenty-first century Europe. The calls for the expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain are echoed in the rhetoric of far-right (and some not-so-far-right-wing) politicians across Europe, who are seeking to garner popular electoral support with an explicitly anti-Islamic platform and often openly advocate the expulsion of "non-assimilated Muslims". Such populist movements are now present in Spain, where painful memories of the Franco dictatorship had until recently tended to marginalise extreme rightwing views. Widespread fear of Muslim migration and Islamic fundamentalism has, for instance, provided a new lease of life to the leader of the far-right Catalan party *Plataforma per Catalunya*, Josep Anglada, who openly calls for the expulsion of "unassimilated" Muslims (Clota 2007; Hidalgo 2010). Even a mainstream politician like ex-prime minister José María Aznar warned his audience at a public reception held at the Hudson Institute in September 2006 that Europe was a continent ruled by "weak leaders" and under "attack" from an "expanding Islam" and "Stone Age" Muslims (Barletta 2007, pp. 48-50).

Can Muslims ever be Europeans? Europeans of the twenty-first century ponder these questions just as Spaniards in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century wondered whether Moriscos could ever be considered Catholic Spaniards. An increasingly vocal number of Europeans appear to have decided that the answer to such a question is negative although the form in which such rejection is expressed varies considerably. At one extreme, a far-right leader like Josep Anglada peppers his diatribes with explicit media-grabbing one-liners such as "a Muslim will always be a Muslim", "Spain is a country that is incompatible with Islam" or even "Spain [as a country] was formed against Islam" (Bécares 2010). Whilst such explicit opinions are those of an extremist minority, it is noteworthy that politicians closer to the middle of the political spectrum have expressed their rejection of the current *status quo* and "unassimilated" Muslims in more subtle ways. The German chancellor Angela Merkel, British Prime Minister David Cameron and French president Nicolas Sarkozy have all recently declared that *laissez-faire* "multiculturalism" must be considered a failure and have advocated the return to more robust policies aiming to encourage the cultural assimilation of migrant groups. The context and content of these declarations leave no room for doubt that the focus of the new assimilationist policies of these governments will primarily be on Muslims (Wright and Taylor 2011; Weaver 2010).

It could be argued that the Moriscos were not the only minority to be victimised or even expelled in early Modern Europe. The decree of Louis XIV revoking the official tolerance of the French Protestant Huguenots in 1685, for instance, is certainly another striking example of how it was not just the Moriscos who paid the price for a failure to conform to the expectations of their government. Equally striking was the pressure brought to bear on English Catholics during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I because of their perceived disloyalty to the Anglican English Monarchy and assumed collusion with its Catholic enemies. Nevertheless, beyond a superficial similarity, there exists a crucial difference between these cases and that of the Moriscos. French Huguenots and English Catholics were not culturally distinct from their persecutors and were persecuted for their failure to accept the state religion of their respective countries. In either case, individuals who renounced their faith could easily be assimilated within the wider population (Adams 1991, pp. 8-48; Questier 1996, pp. 126-167). Conversely, the authorities in Spain sought to entirely destroy the Moriscos' cultural identity and thrust them into a cultural matrix that was alien to them. The abjuration of Islam was not sufficient and the Moriscos were expected to accomplish the impossible: complete acculturation. Whilst Louis XIV hoped to force the

Huguenots to convert to Catholicism with the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1685, Philip III and his government had abandoned their hopes for the conversion of the Moriscos by 1609 and the Spanish expulsion edict offered them no alternative to exile.

The fate of the Moriscos offers twenty-first century Europeans – whatever their faith or cultural background – a dire warning that cannot be overlooked. The parallels between early modern Spain and a twenty-first century Europe in the midst of an identity crisis are disturbing. In the former, religious and cultural identity became increasingly central issues in a society that increasingly defined its cultural and political identity on well-fixed cultural norms and an allegiance to Catholicism in reaction to external threats: the Islamic Ottoman sultanate and the Protestants of northern Europe. The failure to conform to such cultural and religious norms was interpreted as a sign of disloyalty to the crown and church. It is striking indeed that a spectacle commissioned in 1617 by the Duke of Lerma, Philip III's favourite, to celebrate the expulsion of the Moriscos represented it as a victory of 'Old Christians' of pure ancestry over hybrid Moriscos lacking any sense of communal Spanish identity (Marchante-Aragón, 2008).

As European governments apparently move away from 'multiculturalism', national identities are similarly being forged through well-defined markers or norms that purposefully exclude Muslims. Like the Moriscos, European Muslims find that their faith and culture are characterised not only as non-European but also as incompatible with "European values" since they do not conform to these markers. The recent Swiss referendum banning the construction of minarets, the ongoing controversy in France and Denmark regarding the wearing of veils by Muslim women in public spaces or the media storm provoked in France by a fast-food chain's decision to serve Halal meat are all symptomatic of this developing state of affairs (Bremner, 2009; Ramdani 2010; Davies 2010). Moreover, in the aftermath of the 9-11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the increasingly poisonous debate on the place of Islam in the Western World is spreading even further afield than Europe. Incidents such as the furore surrounding the building of the Park51 Islamic centre in Manhattan in 2010 or the building of a Muslim School in the Sydney suburb of Camden in Australia in 2007-8 are just two examples amongst many of the increasing tensions outside of Europe (Hernandez 2010; Ghosh 2010; Senescall and Narushima 2007; McMahon 2008).

Numerous 'Old Christians' in sixteenth-century Spain perceived the Moriscos as an alien minority and it is equally unsettling to witness the increasing use by Islamophobes and

far-right political parties of the term 'indigenous' (the expression '*de souche*' is used in France) to refer to the majority 'white', mostly Christian, population of Europeans (MacKay and Stirrup 2010; Allègre and Jeambar 2010). Such a term casts British and European Muslims as alien elements who do not have a rightful place in twenty-first century Europe. The use of the term 'indigenous' is clearly, and none too subtly, designed by its users to foster a sense of victimhood and legitimate grievance. Thus the 'plight' of 'indigenous' modern Europeans not descended from recent migrants is explicitly compared to that of autochthonous populations of the Americas and Australia, victimised and persecuted by culturally alien invaders. Taking this into consideration, it is hardly surprising that far-right narratives of victimisation have focused upon the notion of a millenarian struggle between Islam and 'the West'. This discourse has regularly presented famous military confrontations such as Poitiers (732), Vienna (1529 and 1683) and Lepanto (1571) as triumphs against the odds in which 'hordes' of Muslim 'invaders' were routed. These battles have, for instance, made regular appearances in the public speeches of Jean-Marie Le Pen and other leaders of the French *Front National* and have been used to support the notion of a "perpetual struggle between Islam and the West". Similarly, *La Padania*, the journal published by the Italian Northern League Party, cited these battles as symbols of Europe's battle for "freedom against Islam" (Davies 1999, pp. 99-100; Guolo 2003, p. 62; Zúquete 2007, p. 127). It is not without irony that the same manipulation of history to foster a sense of victimisation can also be observed in the constant reference by extremist Islamist propaganda to the crusades. This politicisation of the history of Christian-Muslim relations has given birth to a new hypersensitivity. Recent violent incidents in the cathedral of Córdoba in southern Spain, when two Muslim tourists were arrested for praying in what was once the old Great Mosque of that town, are indicative of a new climate of hostility (Tremblett 2010).

To this growing anti-Muslim sentiment can also be added an increasingly provocative portrayal of European Muslims in mainstream European media as disloyal to the countries in which they reside. This can be clearly seen in the wide news coverage given in the British press to the handful of Muslims belonging to the extremist Al-Muhajiroun movement protesting at a military procession in Luton (March 2009) or to the French media's extensive reporting of the insulting whistling of the national anthem by supposedly Muslim youths at international football fixtures (Bremner 2008; Pineau 2008; Taylor and Hughes 2009; Byers 2009). The groups of Islamist extremists responsible for terrorist atrocities such as the 2004 bombings in Madrid or the 2005 suicide bombings in London have cast a pall of suspicion

over all Muslims in Europe in much the same way as all Moriscos were suspected of sympathy with the Ottomans. This climate of fear is regularly supplemented by reports in the media of demographic trends informing readers and audiences of an increase in the Muslim population in Europe. Such reports have fostered a sense of dread and panic amongst non-Muslims against what a recent opinion piece featured in an otherwise respectable mainstream Spanish newspaper has recently gone so far as to describe as a Muslim 'uterine invasion' (*invasión por el útero*) (Michaels 2009, Mucha 2010).

Conclusion

Four centuries ago, hundreds of thousands of Muslims, who considered themselves to be as much native Spaniards as the rest of the population, were ethnically cleansed by a government that considered them to be both culturally alien and a direct threat to the security of the state and church in which they lived. Today, in stark contrast to the Holocaust, Europeans outside Spain have to a large extent entirely forgotten the great expulsion of the Moriscos, which does not feature in school curriculums outside of the Iberian Peninsula. Such indifference is, however, not surprising. Whilst the mass murder of millions of Jews during the Holocaust affected most European countries occupied by Nazi Germany between 1939-1945 and is closer in time. The expulsion of 1609 had few repercussions in the rest of Europe. Most Morisco refugees were deported to Islamic North Africa, where they eventually assimilated into the wider Magrebi population.

The same factors that led directly to the expulsion of 1609 are all too apparent today. The inextricable conflation of radical Islam and the cultural specificities of the diverse Muslim communities in Europe in the eyes of their non-Muslim neighbours is now obvious to any observer. Just as conspicuous is an increasing sense of unease and suspicion regarding the 'loyalty' of European Muslims, principally revolving around the fear that Muslim communities sympathise with extreme fundamentalist groups waging a bloody Jihad against the West and harbour terrorist cells. A comparison of the situations in sixteenth century Spain and twenty-first century Europe cannot help but paint an extremely bleak and disquieting picture for even the most optimistic observer.

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